

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a park district?

A park district, also called a metropolitan park district, is a taxing district created for the management, control, improvement, maintenance and acquisition of parks, boulevards, and recreational facilities.

What would the park district boundaries be?

Park district boundaries will mirror the boundaries of the City of Seattle as they currently exist or as they may exist following future annexations.

Who will govern the park district?

The Seattle City Council will be the park district governing board. There will be an Inter-Local Agreement (ILA) that will describe the responsibilities of Seattle Parks and Recreation for providing the services funded by the park district.

What is an Inter-Local Agreement (ILA)?

It is a legally binding agreement that commits Seattle Parks and Recreation (Parks) to implement projects and use the funds collected through the park district how they are described in the ILA. The ILA requires oversight and reporting and public review of spending priorities. The ILA will be adopted by the City Council.

Who will provide oversight on how Parks spends taxpayer dollars?

In the ILA, Parks will be required to form a Citizens' Oversight Committee to provide advice and oversight for park district services. The committee will consist of four representatives from the Park Board and four from other city commissions, plus seven additional community members. The Oversight Committee will advise the Mayor, City Council, Board of Park Commissioners and Seattle Parks and Recreation on spending and activities, including:

- Making recommendations to the Parks Superintendent on annual allocation of the Major Projects Challenge Fund;
- Reviewing an annual Park District Report, including assessment of performance measures and reporting to the Superintendent and Park Board on implementation issues, concerns and needed adjustments in services or spending;

- Holding public meetings and making recommendations to the Superintendent as input to each 6-year update to the district spending plan.

Can the park district be dissolved?

Yes, the Park District Board can dissolve the District. Under state law, a petition by 10% of the voters from the last general election can prompt the Park District Board to consider dissolving the District.

Can park funds be allocated to cover other city needs?

State law limits park district funds to parks and recreation purposes.

The park district is an independent taxing authority. Do they have to comply with labor contracts and other city laws?

Through the ILA, Parks will be the sole provider of services for the park district. As a City department, Parks is required to comply with City laws, ethics rules and labor contracts.

Who will own the open space and park facilities?

Park and recreation land, facilities, and equipment preserved and maintained with park district funds are and will remain the property of the City of Seattle. Any new or replacement land, facilities, and equipment created or developed with park district funds will become the property of the City of Seattle. Selling City-owned park land or facilities, whether they were bought with City or park district funds, would be subject to Initiative 42 restrictions on the sale of park property.

Can property just be taken and condemned?

If condemnation of property is needed to perform park district services, Parks will follow City condemnation procedures.

Who will decide Parks' annual budget?

The Mayor will direct the development and implementation of Parks' budgets and work programs. City Council will approve Parks budgets and provide oversight. The Park District Board would approve a final park district budget showing how park district revenues would fund part of the Parks' budget.

Seattle Parks and Recreation currently receives funding from the City's General Fund. Will that funding go away?

The City intends to continue to use City revenues to fund Parks and will continue to allocate a minimum of \$89 million per year of General Fund revenues (2014 level of funding) to support Parks' services and facilities unless the City Council by a three-fourths vote determines that a natural disaster or exigent economic circumstances prevent the Council from maintaining this level of General Fund support. Parks' charter revenues (10 percent of certain City fines and fees) will continue to be allocated solely to park and recreation purposes as provided in Article XI Section 3 of the City Charter.

What would the tax rate be with the park district?

For the first year, the park district intends to collect \$47.9 million to fund the proposed list of Investment Initiatives. If the park district had been in effect in 2014, the amount would translate into an estimated tax rate of \$0.33 per \$1,000 of the value of assessed property. This would be a \$133 assessment for the owner of a house valued at \$400,000.

How will funding be allocated after the first six years?

Parks will conduct a community-oriented process to determine spending priorities every 6 years through the life of the Park District. The park district governing board, after considering the recommendations from the public process and the Citizens' Oversight Committee, would determine the spending levels and updated Prioritized List of Investment Initiatives for years 7 through 12 as part of the 2021 budget process. This process of adjusting the spending levels (with annual inflation adjustments) and a revised list of investment initiatives would continue for the life of the park district.

Is there a limit to how much the park district can collect?

Yes, the park district can collect up to 75 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. To collect more than 75 cents per \$1,000 requires a vote of people. At the maximum amount of 75 cents, the owner of a house with an assessed value of \$400,000 would pay \$300.

Is there a ramp-up period for the park district?

2015 would be used as a ramp-up period. Park district funds would not be collected until 2016. During 2015 Parks would establish performance measures, develop processes for allocating funds to other organizations where called for, ramp up hiring, and establish an automated asset management system.

Websites for more information:

City Council website on Parks Funding (approved) -

<http://www.seattle.gov/council/issues/ParksFunding/default.html>

Mayor's Office blog on the Mayor's Parks Funding proposal -

<http://murray.seattle.gov/parkdistrict/#sthash.eZGxAcl5.itFi3rBX.dpbs>

City of Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission webpage on active campaigns -

http://www2.ci.seattle.wa.us/ethics/elpub/el_home.asp

Campaign in support of a Seattle Park District -

<http://seattleparksforall.com/>

Campaign in opposition to a Seattle Park District -

<http://ourparksforever.com/>